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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the problems faced by young Australian Aboriginal families and particularly their children as they attempt to find a satisfactory solution to being Aboriginal in a dominant white urban society. The paper is restricted to a consideration of country-urban Aborigines categorized as 'fringe dwellers,' because they live predominantly both on the outskirts of townships and on the edge of a foreign and urban culture. After a brief discussion on what it means to be an Aborigine in 1980 and a portrayal of some differences between the traditional Aboriginal culture and the dominant Australian culture into which the Aborigine is rapidly moving, aspects of health, welfare and education as they assist or hinder the development of the young families and their children in coping with living in a positive way are considered. It is argued that although many of the social problems inherent in a subculture of poverty can still be found among fringe-dwelling Aborigines, these people have made considerable advancement in a European sense during the past decade, especially they have moved from dependence to independence, developed social skills of home management, learned to use health, welfare and education services as a service and not as a crutch in times of crisis, and participated more readily in the structure and organizations of the white society. (Author/MP)

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SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF FRINGE-DWELLING ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES IN SELECTED TOWNSHIPS OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

"No one arrives at adulthood inherently equipped to fulfil the roles required for being able to cope in society. These roles are learned. The process of learning commences at birth and are continuous, sequential and interdependent. They are the outcome of interaction between the child and its worlds."

(Schapper)

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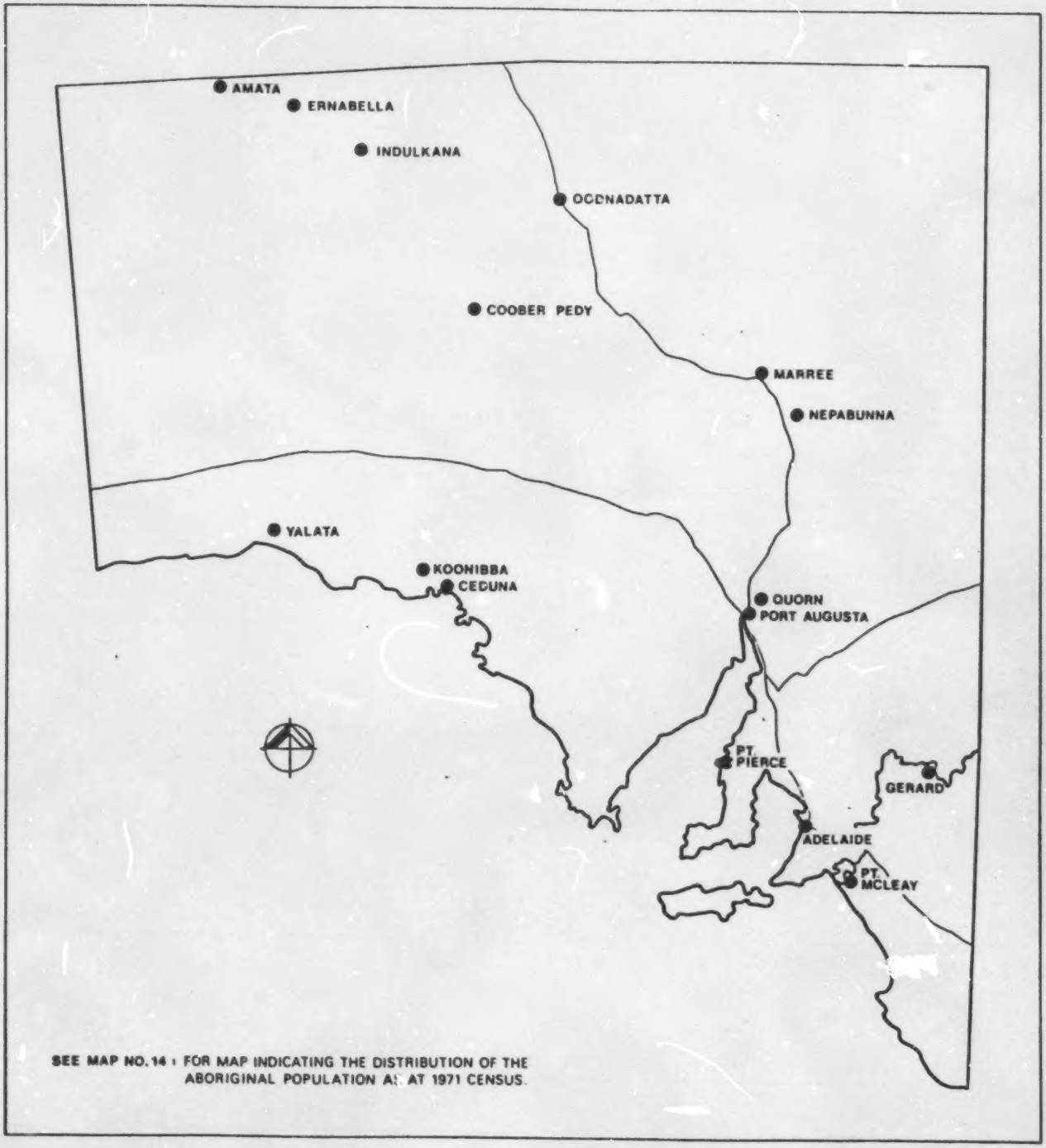

SEE MAP NO. 14 : FOR MAP INDICATING THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE ABORIGINAL POPULATION AS AT 1971 CENSUS.

MAP NO. 24

LOCATION OF MAJOR ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

INTRODUCTION

This paper is about the problems facing young families and particularly their children as they attempt to find a satisfactory solution to being Aboriginal in a dominant white urban society. It deals with their ability, and the opportunities to acquire an ability, to cope as families and individuals within Australian communities.

The paper is restricted to a consideration of country-urban Aborigines who are categorised as 'fringe-dwellers', as many live on the outskirts of townships, a few live within townships, but most live on the edge of a foreign and urban culture. The South Australian townships used as examples in the paper are Port Augusta and Ceduna. The Aborigines inhabitating these towns mostly have moved into them from other regions of South Australia and are of diverse tribes.

The socialisation of the Aborigine into the general Australian society is complex and fraught with many problems. It is, however, a solvable situation. The results of most policies, schemes, projects in the past are disappointing. There is little success to show for the great monetary expense outlayed by Governments over many years and for the dedication and goodwill of the many people who have worked with the Aborigine. One paper can hardly do justice to such an important and all-embracing topic.

Part A of the paper considers briefly what it means to be an Aborigine in 1980 and portrays some differences between the traditional Aboriginal culture and the culture into which the Aborigine is rapidly moving. Part B considers aspects of health, welfare and education as they assist or hinder the development of the family and the young child in coping with living in a positive way. Part C is in the form of a conclusion.

Being Aboriginal in 1980 -

The 1980 inter-censal estimates indicated there were some 54,000 full-blooded Aborigines and 136,000* of part Aboriginal blood in Australia. The estimated Aboriginal population prior to the arrival of white settlers is 300,000. Much has been written on the traditional Aboriginal societies and their cultures, but it is not the purpose of this study to elaborate upon this in any detail. The following paragraph of Schapper (1970:4) is a summary of one aspect of traditional Aboriginal family structure pertinent to the topic and does by inference, highlight cultural contrasts.

> The marriage unit was the smallest social group. Some units consisted only of a man and his wife, though the man would probably have had clearly defined responsibilities for the protection, good behaviour, and supply of food to others among the groups of families with whom he and his wife were domiciled. Other marriage units consisted of a man with several wives, occasionally up to ten or fifteen, and numerous children. The marriage unit was closely interwoven within a group of families. Early child rearing was highly permissive, there being nothing for the child to be disciplined about, or for, in terms of training consistent with the management of a permanent home. Nor did the parents need to discipline their children to take their place in an unseen and strange society. Throughout childhood children were surrounded by the members of a group of families and these constituted their present and future relevant society. The marriage unit fed the children who, initially, were socialised informally by the wider group. In due course they were formally initiated into their social responsibilities. Progression was rapid: from childhood, without responsibilities, to maturity for work and marriage. Sexual relations commenced at an early age. They were restricted to within the kinship system though not restricted to the marriage couple, either before or after marriage. Most persons would have had more than one spouse in their lifetime and many men more than one at a time, but not so the women.

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* Aboriginal Health Bulletin No. 1, Aboriginal Vital Statistics Commonwealth Department of Health 1980

Little of the traditional culture remains certainly in its purest form. Indeed, Schapper (1970:9) believes that most Aborigines today are culturally and genetically different from Aborigines at the time of first contact. They are, he says, a creation of the white man. There are, however, many cultural traits remaining and do remain to a greater or lesser degree depending upon where the individual stands on the societal continuum, one end of which is tribal and the other urbanised and acculturated in a western sense. As the disintegration of the tribal way of life continues more and more Aborigines are moving to country towns and major cities where the marked differences in cultures become highlighted. Whilst such disintegration is occuring there is, however, a strong resurgence of Aborigines' pride in their Aboriginality and cultural heritage. Many Aboriginal groups are establishing two bases - one urban, one tribal.

Gallacher (1969:100-102) elaborates on several cultural factors which differentiate the Aborigine from the white Australian.

First - Future Orientation - White man is always concerned for the future. Aborigines are concerned with the present and the past - with maintaining harmony with nature rather than manipulating the forces of nature to satisfy future needs.

Second - Time - White society is preoccupied with time. Aborigines have a broader concept of time - bounded by night and day and seasons.

Third - Saving - White man saves for the future. The Aborigine shares his possessions with his kin rather than hoarding for himself.

Fourth - Competition - A dominant hallmark of our culture is stress on the individual - and the encouraging of competitiveness. For the Aborigine, group goals are more important than individual goals. Co-operation rather than competitiveness is the right way of life.

Fifth - Work - The Aborigines did work in their indigenous state - their work was part of on-going unified activity of living.

Sixth - Methods of Learning - Whilst whites are ever eager to change their world and to question what is happening on it Aborigines understand current world in terms of past - all phenomena can be accounted for by reference to approved customs - children are not encouraged to question, to explore ideas and seek a 'scientific' understanding - the pattern had already been determined. Observation, imitation and rote learning rather than inductive/deductive thinking were the modes of learning.

Many Aborigines caught in this considerable cultural dichotomy have cause to say as one person did:

> I must prove myself everywhere I go. If I move into strange communities, White communities, people look at me and think, 'Oh, an Aboriginal person; he's probably a no-hoper' - and I must prove myself. People just do not accept me as a person.
>
> (Moriarty, 1969, as quoted in Watts/Henry 1978)

Being an Aborigine in 1980 is in many respects much different from being one in 1950 or 1960. Certainly the growing Aboriginal rights movement and the growing number of Aboriginal organisations, are beginning to move the Aborigines in a positive way towards bettering their position in the greater Australian society by demanding just recognition of their identity as Australians. As well, these represent the reawakening of Aboriginal pride in their ethnic heritage. It could reasonably be said that it has taken not twenty years but almost 200 years to become legally equal to other Australians and for the white society to allow this to occur. The official Government policy of cultural pluralism allows self-management for Aborigines. This is causing the white Australian Government Departments and other authorities to defer more to the wishes of the Aborigines rather than, as previously was the case, to make decisions for them.

Mention was made earlier of a societal continuum representing tribalism at one end and western urbanisation at the other. The Aborigines, the subject of this paper, hover somewhere in the middle of the continuum. They 'hover' simply because their current societal condition can fluctuate from day to day as they move from or to a reserve (Mission or Government), a country township, metropolitan Adelaide. Their purpose for

moving and length of stay in the new locality also complicate the scene. Of course, there are those Aborigines who are seen to be more or less permanent in one or other sector of Aboriginal society. The connotation of 'hovering' also includes uncertainty, and this aptly fits the description of urban fringe-dwelling Aborigines.

When the Aborigine lives in close proximity to the technically more advanced white Australian there begins a questioning of the mores which make up the traditional Aboriginal culture. Penny (1977:84) believes such questioning reduces their communal strengths.

The Aborigines here depicted are not tribal, they have left or been removed from their tribal lands even though many have brought aspects of their tribal life with them. And the young do question the culture of their parents. The young men in Port Augusta, for example, tend to avoid the tribal elders who come to that township from time to time to prepare youth for tribal initiation and subsequently to initiate them. They prefer to avoid the hardships and ritual learning of initiation ceremonies rather than accept them as 'tradition' and something through which they must pass to reach adulthood. However, all this questioning and avoiding contributes in no small way to the basic aimlessness inherent in the term 'fringe-dweller', as they are not accepted in urban society either.

When questioned of the problems they experience in their work and of the problems the Aborigine is experiencing, white people currently involved in the welfare of Aboriginal people invariably comment on the consequences of the forced destruction of the Aboriginal society and in particular on the breakdown of the Aboriginal family as a basic social entity. Some claim, as do Gale & Binnion (1975:49), that the structure of present social welfare services encourages this breakdown in that financial and other support is generally given to the women and children in the form of supporting mothers' allowance and not to the men. They believe the absence and/or displacement of the male in Aboriginal households contributes greatly to the breakdown of the family unit.

> He is now often found in gaol, hostel, alcoholic centre or place for homeless men. ... Men who cannot earn enough to support their families have no self respect and little appreciation from their wives or children. Indeed, partly because of their economic limitations, half of the Aboriginal men cannot even get wives. The circular path which so many men walk between gaol, legal aid, prisoners' aid and night shelters for homeless men, is but a reflection of the fact that so many Aboriginal men have no place in society. Alcoholism and gaol are all too often the only available escape routes for men who believe themselves to be of no economic or social value.

The problem of petrol sniffing by adolescent Aboriginal males at Yalata, an isolated Aboriginal community some 200 kms from Ceduna is a striking example of the modern day problems being experienced by Aboriginal families. A study by Morice & Brady (1979) commented that petrol sniffing has assumed serious proportions when almost all male youth have indulged to some degree, some to a chronic stage. They also commented that 75% of Yalata males aged 16 - 17 had appeared before the Courts as legal offenders, some on multiple occasions.

Being Aboriginal in the 1980's implies establishing and clarifying what is meant by the term 'an Aboriginal identity'. Penny (1977:24), discussing identity (23-25), is not only sceptical of the term but questions what aspects of Aboriginal identity need to be preserved.

> What to white people is the Aboriginal 'identity'? To some, the stereotype is drunken layabouts, shiftless unreliables content to live off hand-outs; to others, child-like incompetents who need white guidance and even control for their own good; to others, members of a fast vanishing culture which needs to be studied and recorded while there is still time; to others, more romantic than realistic, among the few remnants of the noble savage.

However, he believes it is not white Australian's responsibility to protect the Aboriginality of Aborigines; it is theirs. What the white Australian should be doing is compensating the Aborigine for what has been done in destroying their competence, confidence and dignity. Compensatory programmes should be devised which will assist the Aborigine to learn the patterns of behaviour for coping in the dominant society. Schapper (1970:48) believes it is essential for sound planning of interventionist strategies to know the problems being experienced by families.

This is particularly important when related to patterns of child-rearing which, if they are to advance as a social group, " ... are those positively associated with emotional health and stability, educational achievement, social acceptability, adequate conscience formation, and family stability".

The following looks at health, education and welfare as these relate to assisting family development and the growth of children during their formative years of life.

PART B : HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE

Health

Many of the problems related to Aboriginal child health are claimed to be the result of poor home environments. Such environments very greatly depending upon location and whether or not there is a degree of control over the kind and quality of housing, such as is exercised by the South Australian Housing Trust or by Aboriginal Community Councils. Generally speaking the city-urban children have better health than country-urban children. However, Gale (1972:203) claims the Aboriginal child, in all cases, is considerably less healthy than white counterparts.

A great deal of the literature, apart from medical research-type studies, mentions the need to improve housing for Aborigines in order for there to be a concomitant improvement in health conditions. Samisoni (1978: 47) commented that unless the cycle of a poor home environment which gives rise to malnutrition and underdevelopment of infants and children can be disrupted, there seems little chance of any real success in the struggle for improving the deprived socio-economic status of Australia's black communities.

Other writers on Aboriginal health believe the destruction of Aboriginal societies and the non-replacing of their societies with another, equally as disciplined and supportive, has exacerbated the problems of health.

A vicious cycle is established - loss of culture, loss of identity, new foods (usually carbohydrates) and a lack of knowledge of how to prepare these, increasing proneness to contracting white man's diseases, poverty, rampant alcoholism ending in societal and human breakdown. The picture thus painted is far from being positive. Many individuals and government agencies are attempting to alleviate the problems as quickly as possible.

Brand and others (1978) reporting on some research done in Sydney in 1978 at the Aboriginal Medical Services which analysed the weight records of Aboriginal children born between 1974 and 1977 commented on the general improvement in the weight of children. They believe the reasons for this improvement include a better knowledge and understanding of the Aboriginal people by the health workers; reduced waiting time at clinics; efforts made to have continuity of doctors, and more care taken with immunisation. In addition the use of vitamin-mineral supplements, the eating of fruit and vegetables, and the introduction of lactose-hydrolysed milk for children with lactose malabsorption, together with a general emphasis on preventative medicine, they believe play a major role in the health and growth of the Aboriginal child.

The Medical Officer at the Davenport Community Centre on the fringe of Port Augusta informed the writer that many of the health problems he encounters are related to poor nutrition. The Aborigine's diet consists of excessive carbohydrates and is deficient in vitamins and minerals. The Aborigines, because of their poor educational background and low level of income, do not know how to buy nor prepare 'white man's food' and generally eat food high in carbohydrates. His Centre actively encourages the eating of fruit as no cooking is needed. There is also an emphasis on vitamins, especially vitamin B1 and C. This view is supported by the staff of the Davenport Community Homemakers' Program who see their main task as teaching Aboriginal women how to cook a nutritious meal using fresh meat (the cheaper cuts) and vegetables and not to rely on tinned food, overly sweetened soft-drinks from tins, white bread and strongly sugared tea. There is considerable debate and a degree of scepticism amongst the medical fraternity as to the value of vitamin C as preventative medicine for Aboriginal

nutrition problems. It is generally accepted, however, that vitamin C does have some effect on young children's health, but it must be present in diets while the child is young - before 4 years of age - for it to have any lasting effect.

The most common medical problems the general practitioner encounters with children appear to be viral gastro-enteritis, infections of the skin (e.g. scabies) and chronic viral chest/respiratory complaints. Such problems are found also with adults along with illnesses generated by chronic alcoholism. There are some eye problems (e.g. squints) but unless these are detected before age 3 it is considered too late. The increased incidence of trachoma reflects the unhygenic effect of living a sedentary life under traditional conditions. Of the 90 children attending Yalata Aboriginal School, for example, some 32 in a recent health check were found to have trachoma with varying degrees of severity.

It is generally accepted that Aborigines trained and working in health and related areas greatly increase the effectiveness of the service provided. Similarly, Aborigines are being involved in the management of health services, for example the Davenport Community Health Service, and such involvement is breaking-down cultural barriers towards European-style health services and promoting a growing understanding of practices related to healthy living.

In summary, Aborigines appear to experience a fairly high degree of ill health and general morbidity. Gale and Binnion (1975:26) claim this is a factor in their poverty. It is also a result of their poverty, locking them into the 'poverty cycle'. One reason for this ill-health is related to poor nutrition which is carbohydrate excessive. Many subsequent and related health problems, including some effects of alcoholism, stem from poor nutrition. A second reason relates to inadequate housing, sanitation and general cleanliness in European-style homes. Overcrowding, where this happens, does not assist good health. The generally prevailing attitudes of Aborigines towards their social condition - those of resignation and the feelings of helplessness - do not stimulate in them a positive attitude or motivation towards bettering their health. A continuing awareness on the part of health workers

of the need to work with Aborigines and to lead them towards a better understanding of an attitude towards health, it is believed, will pay dividends in the long term.

Many of the comments made later in this paper with regard to educational problems also are applicable to considerations of health. The relative failure of health services has been due to an inability on the part of health workers to develop concepts of family and community health which have meaning within the present Aboriginal culture and which are able to be expressed within Aboriginal patterns of communication. At least in education the product is somewhat valued by Aborigines, e.g. education for employment, but this is not so in health where the obvious advantages of good health are not comprehended by the Aborigine. What is needed is a programme of health education which will create in the Aborigine an awareness of the necessity for good health as a component of their advancement in the greater Australian society into which they are inevitably emerging and one which is compatible with their own evolving cultural values.

Welfare

The term is perforce an eclectic one when dealing generally with Aboriginal families. Matters pertaining to the well-being of individuals and families are the responsibility of many agencies handling Aboriginal affairs. It is claimed by field-workers that there are too many agencies working in an unco-ordinated way, each providing separate specialised services of a kind to families. The lack of co-ordination is particularly evident in the townships discussed in this paper and seems to be most pertinent when considering the differences in the responsibilities of the State Department for Community Welfare which has the day-to-day concern for the problems of people and the somewhat more distant, yet financially more powerful, Federal Department of Social Security. It is the latter agency which controls pension and other social security payments such as child endowment, unemployment benefits, age and invalid pensions, single parent and widows' pensions.

It is accepted that government departments and agencies working in welfare oriented services have a difficult task and can seldom, if ever, please all of the people all of the time. However, it does little to enhance their image or their effectiveness if bureaucratic procedures are permitted to get in the way of the work they are charged to do. Constant changing of staff does little to engender a feeling of trust in the Aboriginal population. Too many field workers stay in one location for as short a time as two to three years, sometimes less. The directors (or local/regional supervisors) sometimes change more frequently and this can hardly assist sound management procedures let alone build quality and continuity in the services offered.

There is a genuine concern amongst the field workers spoken to to see greater co-ordination particularly at the systems level where policy decisions are made. Until this happens the feeling is that a great deal of what they do is merely scratching the surface of the really deep and complicated social problems encountered by urbanised Aborigines. The detribalisation of Aborigines, the breakdown of tribal structures and tribal systems are seen by field workers as being the cause of most welfare problems. Health workers and people involved in education support this belief. Chronic alcoholism which is a growing problem among Aborigines is but one symptom of the effects of detribalisation and the resultant 'meaninglessness' of a non-tribal, non European way of life.

Specific problems of welfare vary from location to location and are governed to a large extent by location. For example, the problems being experienced at Davenport Reserve by the fringe-dwelling Aborigines differ in kind and intensity from those who dwell in the town of Port Augusta, yet the distance is but a few kilometres. Similarly, the problems encountered at Yalata Reserve, because of its geographic isolation and particular history and unified kinship, differ again in many respects from those of townships. It would seem that the problems which continually come to the forefront relate to family breakdown, alcoholism, health (including nutrition and sanitation) and housing. No matter whether one is discussing health, education or welfare matters these problems influence discussions and decisions made. They are

problems of coping. They are indicators of the needs of Aborigines. They indicate also the interdependency of needs regardless of the division of services which might be bureaucratically shared between a number of Government agencies.

Education

Education can be described as:

> ... the process by which potentialities for becoming human develop into the actual abilities and the functioning characteristics which enable the individual to live at least competently as a member of a human society, and if genetically favoured and fortunate in his education to live expressively and even creatively.
>
> (Penny 1977:77)

All cultures have a traditional form of education. It can be said such education, because it permits the culture to survive over extended periods of time and incorporates all kinds of stimuli, though simple in style and straight forward in nature, is effective. The Aborigines had their own culture and were well educated into it. Schooling, as both an entity and a process, is a peculiarly European style of educating. This, too, has been modified considerably over the hundreds of years it has been around and has adopted cultural characteristics as it has been accepted by one culture after another.

The efforts by Australians up to now to assist Aborigines to become educated in a western sense have not been markedly successful. Gale and Binnion (1973:26-27) commented of Adelaide Aboriginal familes that all have a low level of education and that lack of education, like ill health, is probably partly r[illegible]nsible for the general level of Aboriginal poverty.

This view, that education has not been responsive to the needs of the Aboriginal community, is supported by Watts and Henry (1978:181) and Penny (1977:6) who commented that "schooling for many Aborigines has not been very educative, and for some, diseducative". He believed it is dis[illegible]ducative because good schooling is an indispensable ingredient

of a good education and the unschooled or poorly schooled are at the bottom of our socio-economic heap.

It would be easy for this paper to dwell on Australia's past attempts at educating its Aborigines. Much has been learnt from the mistakes of the past and governments are moving more systematically and in a more soundly based manner into Aboriginal education.

Sharp (in Dunn and Tatz 1969:185) in a commentary on a paper given at a conference on Aboriginal education made the following observation:

> ... the special task that confronts the educational system in Australia at the moment is threefold. Firstly, to make sure the Aboriginal and part Aboriginal children get into the educational system; secondly, having got them into the system, to ensure that their interest can be captured enough to make them, as individuals, want to stay: and thirdly, and the most difficult question of all, to ensure that when the conflicting demands of the outside world are felt, that parents and children see the advantages in remaining on at school for longer.

In Part, these sentiments have been echoed some eleven years later by Penny (1980:38) when he wrote:

> Just now, by far the most valuable form of education for adults living in the townships is not schooling, whether vocational or in literacy. It is education about schooling; about the very poor level at which most of their boys and girls leave school and the reasons for it; about its inadequacy not just for entry upon 'outside' courses of professional training but for their boys and girls to do what the adults want them to do.

In keeping with a great deal of the current thinking and research about education one measure of the effectiveness of education relates to the degree of involvement and contribution of the users, in this particular case the parents of the children. The gap between the European oriented school system and its schools and the majority of Aboriginal homes is much greater than for any similar European (white Australian) situation. Indeed, Schapper (1970:36) believes the opportunity for Aboriginal children to partake in the necessary variety of enriching out-of-school learning experiences is virtually nil. He claims such an environment is more suited to maintaining their present conditions than to advancing them in any of the areas of social living essential to upgrading

their lot. He is most concerned that for adequacy of coping there be an emotionally and economically stable family home situation.

The few successful educational ventures currently in operation are making every effort, indeed as a priority, to involve in an active way the Aboriginal families and communities both in the day-to-day functioning of the operation and in its management. In effect, it is this parental education which is attempting to change the attitudes of the parents towards the particular task at hand. Dunn and Tatz (1969:190) believe it is likely the attitudes of the family and the Aboriginal community are of more importance than the teaching methods of the schools.

Aborigines speak highly of the pre-school services being provided for Aboriginal children in Port Augusta. Children under the age of four years attend a pre-preschool known as Tji Tji Wiltja (an Aboriginal word meaning children's shelter or house). Funding for this centre comes from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs through the Kindergarten Union of South Australia. The staff of the centre are Aborigines who are receiving on-the-job pre-school teacher training under a specially funded scheme. As a member of the Kindergarten Union, the centre receives professional support from the Union's Advisers in the conducting of a special programme for two and three year old children. A management committee elected from amongst the parents of the children attending the pre-school is responsible for budget allocations and the day-to-day management of the centre's finances. A bus collects the children daily and takes them to the pre-school where they receive that educating and caring normal in a good pre-school. A hot lunch is provided the children and for which the parents pay a small charge. After a three-hour programme and lunch, the children are transported back to their homes. Medical and dental care are regularly provided the children and parents are encouraged to participate in all the activities of the centre. Indeed the pre-school is in every way a community centre for young Aboriginal families and affords them experiences in decision making as members of the centre's management committee. As it is situated close to the Aboriginal Community Centre it provides a convenient focus for parents (particularly mothers) and their children of all ages.

In his two reports mentioned in this paper, Penny (1977 & 1980) strongly questions teachers' attitudes towards teaching and their teaching methods particularly when these are related to Aborigines. Simply put he believes teachers should teach, they do not just create an environment and hope to heaven some learning will ensue. In this regard he is even more sceptical of the teachers in the early years of formal schooling and in the pre-schools. If one considers the Aboriginal views of education and schooling "... as a good thing, a means of enabling their children to get better jobs, to have better lives than they had", (Watts & Henry: 1978:35) schooling for the Aborigine has a far greater compensatory purpose than for the general Australian scene. The urgency for compensatory programmes for Aborigines has been voiced for some considerable time. Such programmes should support children (and their families) at the critical periods in their lives - and for most this is during the early childhood years.

To summarise, if education programmes, and particularly school programmes, can counteract the negative factors mentioned in the following statement of Watts & Henry (1978:44) describing some of the reasons for the lack of success of attempts at schooling Aborigines:

(a) a lack of understanding by parents of the goals of the school programme, its curriculum and its methodology, its relevance to the children's futures;

(b) a lack of understanding by the teachers of the home circumstances of the pupils, of parental aspirations for the children, of the nature and extent of the children's out-of-school learnings;

(c) an alienation of the child from the school, and perhaps from the mainstream culture, in view of its perceived irrelevance to his life, and a diminished self-concept;

(d) an alienation of the cultural minority from the institutions of the mainstream culture (including the school) and a perpetuation of their socio-economic disadvantage;

it can be hoped that there will be a considerable increase in the effectiveness of Aboriginal education.

PART C : CONCLUSION

The paper was introduced with a definition of socialisation which related to a family's ability to cope with being Aboriginal in a dominant white, urban society. Many of the comments made throughout the paper by writers on Aboriginal health, education and welfare and particularly by field workers presently working with Aborigines could be construed as being depressing if taken out of their appropriate historical and

developmental contexts. It is critical that such comments be considered within the developmental continuum common to all societies.

Few people would deny that the Aborigine has made considerable advancement in an European sense, in the areas of general health care, social welfare, educational standards and housing during the past ten or so years. Some people might claim the Aborigine's self-esteem has improved also. Many Aboriginal families are independent, self-sustaining family units and are coping quite well in an urbanised European society. The children of these families are performing reasonably well at school, lead normally healthy lives and are socially well adjusted. Such families are quite numerous in the townships of Port Augusta and Ceduna where housing is adequate, of good quality and integrated throughout the urban suburbs rather than grouped together in clusters in any one particular location. In such an environment young families, and particularly the children of these families, are able to grow up in a supportive environment at what we know to be a critical stage in their development.

Unfortunately the advancement of the urban fringe-dwelling Aborigine is not as great as that of the integrated urban Aborigine. In some cases the fringe-dweller lives in a more traditional manner in 'wurlies' or 'wiltjas' such as in the Duck Ponds camp at Ceduna. Some live on Aboriginal reserves such as Davenport and Koonibba. These reserves might be described as fostering a life-style somewhere between European and tribal Aboriginal. Many of the social problems inherent in a sub-culture of poverty can be found amongst these people. For example, there is overcrowding in homes as extended families and friends congregate in large numbers; there is aimlessness and boredom and these lead to problems of vagrancy and the excessive consumption of alcohol; social welfare payments become an end in themselves and the people who cannot get work begin not to want to work or to 'better' themselves; health problems are compounded, welfare problems become crisis-oriented and education, ineffectual and irrelevant.

It is a vicious cycle and one which does little to enhance family cohesion.

Amongst the older Aborigines experiencing this lifestyle the most commonly heard lament is for the passing of their traditional customs and culture. However, despite these significant deficits it can be claimed that the lot of the fringe-dwelling Aborigine has greatly improved during the past decade.

The work of the government agencies in the field of Aboriginal welfare, seldom outstandingly successful, seems to be fraught with problems of bureaucratic territoriality to such an extent that field officers find it difficult to work together toward a common cause. Perhaps a modern version of the colonial administrator, a person preferably of Aboriginal descent, who can cut across governmental red-tape with the authority necessary to be able to get people together for effective and efficient consultation and action, might be a solution to this problem of territoriality. Perhaps the greatest handicap to effective work by government agencies is the all too frequent changing of field staff. The irony here is highlighted when comparing the effectiveness of co-ordination of government activities with those of the Aboriginal organisations. The latter appear to be well co-ordinated, as exemplified at both Ceduna and Port Augusta. Such successful Aboriginal involvement in decision-making and organisational management at a high level bespeaks genuine social advancement. The rise of Aboriginal groups and associations also reflects a resurgence of pride in being Aboriginal.

What, therefore, are the coping skills that are being learnt by young Aboriginal families as they progress in the socialisation process? First they move from dependence to independence. Such transition is clearly seen when comparing the successfully integrated Aborigines in townships with those Aborigines who are still 'fringe-dwellers'. Regular employment, effective social security in the form of family allowances, adequate good quality housing and supportive health and welfare services assist in this regard. Second, the development of social skills of home management are crucial to family development. Helping services such as the Davenport Community's Homemakers Programme described earlier assist families with such skills as budgeting, cooking, purchasing foodstuffs and clothing and many others. All of these skills relieve tensions inherent in a disorganised, mismanaged home. They are basic to successful transition from one life-style to another.

They also enhance the self-esteem of the Aboriginal parents and this has a spin-off in many aspects of family life. Too often the absence of such skills leads families into taking the easy way out, that of not trying to cope. Third, the skill of working the system must be learnt. Health, education and welfare services are available and are a support to families. The coping family uses these services as a service, the non-coping family uses them as a crutch in times of crisis. Fourth, the coping Aboriginal family is reasonably comfortable in a largely white society and participates more readily in the structures and organisations of that society. The non-coping Aboriginal family retreats to the shelter of separatism thereby gaining the strength needed from others in a similar situation.

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